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USSR-BERLIN: The Soviets are attempting to soften the impact of their recent tough negotiating tactics at the Berlin talks, but they still emphasize that no early movement should be expected from them.

Speaking at a social function in Berlin on 10 June, a Soviet adviser told US Mission officers that there had been an "unfortunate misunderstanding" at the advisers meeting on 9 June. He said that the Soviets had thought that they were meeting Western views, but the allies evidently expected too much from them.

While expressing the hope that the meeting would be regarded as merely an episode, he emphasized that the Soviets should not be expected to be any more forthcoming in the near future--in particular, at the next advisers' meeting set for 22 June. He claimed that Moscow was having difficulty keeping up with the current pace of the talks. He also alleged that bureaucratic problems within the Foreign Ministry in Moscow were delaying the approval of new instructions. Consequently, the Soviet negotiators in Berlin expected none soon.

The Soviet shift to a harder approach for the time being may stem in part from the claimed bureaucratic reasons. It is, however, more likely to have been motivated by a desire to take advantage of a situation in which Moscow believes that the French, and perhaps the West Germans, may be prepared to be even more flexible than in the past to achieve an early agreement. The Soviets may also hope that the visit of Chancellor Brandt to the US might result in new flexibility in the Western position, especially if Moscow can create the impression that further Western concessions are needed to restore "momentum" to the talks.

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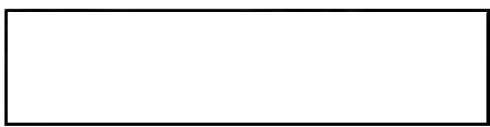
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